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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: MONROVIA'S NEW MAYOR CLEANING UP CITY FAST

11. (SBU) President Sirleaf appointed her friend and trusted confidante, Mary Broh, as Mayor of the City of Monrovia on February 16. As Mayor, Broh replaces the political placeholder Ophelia Hoff-Saytumah, wife of Minister of State for Economic and Legal Affairs, Morris Saytumah. The appointment of Mary Broh, a U.S. Green Card holder known for her ability to accomplish projects quickly, is seen as an attempt by the President to spruce up the city of Monrovia before the International Women's Colloquium March 7-8.

12. (SBU) Broh -- who was appointed only on February 2 -- has already joined police officers in a bid to remove street sellers from the major streets of Monrovia. She has ordered and personally supervised the removal and demolition of illegal structures. "Craft Alley," a street leading to the entrance of Embassy's Greystone Compound where local vendors sell handicrafts, was one of the first market areas affected. Temporary wooden stalls and make-shift craft shops have been demolished. Some of the vendors who had been working in Craft Alley for fifteen years were in the back of their stalls as they were being destroyed. The more permanent buildings are scheduled to be removed soon. The artisans are blaming the Embassy for the loss of their structures and livelihoods, even though Post had nothing to do with this order. During her Senate hearing, Broh reportedly apologized for the fires and her swift actions.

BIOGRAPHY

13. (U) Mary Broh is regarded as a tough disciplinarian and no-nonsense administrator. She fled Liberia during the Taylor Administration and resided in Brooklyn, New York where she served on various Liberian welfare organizations as a community activist. She returned to Liberia after the 2005 elections and was appointed Director of Passports at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she fired and prosecuted corrupt officials who were extending passports illegally and introduced better controls in the system. She also served as Director of Special Projects in the Office of President Sirleaf and undertook several projects to give Monrovia a face lift. Most recently, she served as Deputy Managing Director for Administration at the National Port Authority, where she introduced strong policies to increase security, often standing at the gates of the port herself to monitor compliance.

COMMENT

14. (SBU) Members of the public have hailed Broh's appointment on radio talk shows as someone who can remake Monrovia into the beautiful city it once was. Indeed, she has already accomplished some things that her predecessor was unable or unwilling to do in over three years. On the other hand, Broh's swift and assertive action will undoubtedly have social repercussions if no alternatives are provided to those who have lost their homes or livelihoods. Overall, Broh's decisive attitude and output-oriented productivity have been very helpful to the Embassy in the past, but we are mindful that she can be autocratic and strong-willed and we will keep lines of communication open with her. END COMMENT.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD